Growth of IT Sector

3591. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item published in the Hindustan Times, dated 20th February, 2000 captioned ""IT boom may widen disparities" as only a fraction of population is directly involved in the INFOTECH Sector in the country;

(b) if so, what concrets steps Government have, so far, taken to cover more population, both from urban and rural parts of the country, toward revolutionary growth of the IT Sector; and

(c) what is the Government's likely investment if IT infrastructure during the eyars 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 and opening of Regional Engineering Colleges in the country?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) Governemnt is aware of the issue of possible increase in disparity in uses and benefits of IT, a pehnomenon popularly known as digital divide. To address this, Government has taken a number of steps which inter alia include:

— Computerisation of variety of applications right upto the district level supported by a nationwide coputer network called NICNET.

— Encouragement of all Central Ministries/Departments to spend upto 3% of their budget on IT.

— Progressive emphasis by State and Central Governments to introduce e-governance, thus leading to increased efficiency and transparency.

— In North Eastern Region, community information centres are being set up at all the 486 blocks.

— In education, use of computers have been promoted.

  * in schools
  * skills are beign imparted to meet growing IT industry needs and
  * on-line learning is being introduced to increase number of skilled manpower without degradation in quality.

— A project to generate entrepreneurship through ""Low cost multi-media content creation" launched.

— A pilot village information centre (SAMADHAN CENTRE) project initiated at Tamilnadu to provide information centres to 30-40 panchayats. This will provide information on public health, village level resource map, crop planning, soil conservation and fertility management and water resources planning in addition to imparting computer literacy to the community.

— A unique "wired villages" pilot project has been implemented at the Warana Nagar cooperative complex in Kolhapur district in Maharashtra.

— Employment generation schemes in North East.

— Encourage widespread use of Indian language interface of computers.

— Increasing the reach of computers and internet at various levels as also making it increasingly affordable.

— Government has implemented internet Service providers (ISPs) Policy. No licence fee is payable for first five years and a nominal fee of one rupee is to be paid after five years. The policy provides for inter-connection of networks and setting up of international gateways and hiring of bandwidth by foreign satellites by the internet service providers independent of USNL. Further, the infrastructure for Internet is proposed to be upgraded as below:—

  * Department of Telecom Services (DTS) is setting up national backbone in the country.

  * Internet Service Providers are allowed to set up last mile linkages freely by fibre optic or by radio communication.

  * The Internet access is also allowed through authorised cable TV.

— The tariff for internet access has been recently reduced. DTS has recently offered 20% concession on rental for leased lines taken and used for internet applications. Students are being given one time concession on internet accounts by DTS. Access to internet on local call basis from the nearest internet node has been provided throughout the country except in Andaman and Nicobar Island and Leh (J&K). The existing departmental Public Call Operators (PCO) and Subscriber Trunk Dialing (STD) booths are proposed to be upgraded to public tele-info/cyber centres. These centres will provide multi-utility services such as internet, email access and internet libraries.

(c) The approximate investment of the Government in IT infrastructure covering inter alia Department of Telecommunications Service (DTS), National Informatic Centre (NIC) Software Technolgy Parks of India (STPI), National Information Infrastructure (NII) of Ministry of Information Technology, Human Resource Development (HRD) of Ministry of Information Technology and Education and Research Network (ERNET) in the year 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 are as follows:

1999-2000-Rs. 250 crores

2000-2001-Rs. 530 crores

There is no plan to open new Regional Engineering Colleges at present.

Unveiling of New Millennium IT Policy by Karnataka

3592. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Karnataka Government has unveiled its new millennium inforamtion Technology policy;

(b) if so, the amount proposed to be raised through "Mahiti bonds' by the Karnataka Government; and

(c) the amount proposed to be provided by Government to implement the new IT Policy by the State Government?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) The Government of Karnataka have information that they unveiled the Millenium IT Policy on 18.3.200.